

Holiday Burglary Prevention

Christmas holidays are a special time when families and friends come together to celebrate the season. It is also the time of year where families and friends are most generous and practice the tradition of gift giving. It should be a joyous and happy time for all of us.

Unfortunately for us, home burglars view the holiday season a little differently. For them, it is a time of opportunity to burglarize your home for cash, credit cards, and all the new gifts of small electronics, computers, jewelry, and easily sold valuables.

Here are a few tips of what they look for when shopping for a house to burglarize. These tips will help you enjoy the holidays without incident.

- Burglars look for an easy entry with good escape routes. Don't openly display your Christmas tree and gifts in the front window so it's easily visible from the street. It's too tempting for them to smash the window and grab the wrapped packages.
- Burglars look for occupancy cues like outdoor lights burning 24 hours a day, piled up newspapers, or advertising flyers hanging on the door knob. Use an inexpensive light timer when you are away and ask a neighbor to keep the front of your home clean of papers and debris.
- Burglars know to look for the hidden door key near the front entrance. Don't hide spare keys under rocks, in flowerpots, or above door ledges. Instead give the spare key to a trusted neighbor or friend.
- Burglars prefer to enter through unlocked doors or windows. Sliding windows that are not secure can be seen from distance. One holiday problem can occur when exterior Christmas light extension cords are run inside through a window and prevent it from being secured. Hire an electrician or handyman to install an inexpensive exterior outlet for your holiday lights.
- Don't post your family name on your mailbox or on your house. A burglar can call directory assistance or access social media to get your telephone number and call your home while in front of your house to confirm that you are away.
- Don't leave descriptive voicemail messages like, "You've reached the Wilson's...we're away skiing for the Christmas holidays...please leave a message." Burglars love to hear that they have plenty of time to break in and completely ransack your home.

- After Christmas day, don't pile up empty gift boxes from your new computer, DVD player, or stereo receiver on the street for the garbage man. Burglars appreciate knowing that you have expensive gifts inside for them to steal. Break them down or cut them up to conceal the items better. After a lucrative burglary, the chances of being burglarized again are increased to steal the new replacement products.
- Last, but not least, fortify your home by installing solid core doors, heavy duty locks, longer screws in the lock strike plates and door hinges, and install secondary security devices on all accessible sliding windows.
- Don't post your travel plans online! Make sure to keep travel plans off your social media networks. Don't post where you're going, when you are leaving, or when you will be back, because you're basically just making a thief's job easier.